Melia, R.J.W., Chinn, S., Rona, R.J. "Respiratory illness and home environment of ethnic groups" British Medical Journal 296:1438-1441, 1988.

ABSTRACT: Factors contributing to differences in the prevalences of respiratory symptoms and diseases among ethnic groups were studied in primary schoolchildren living in 20 innercity areas of England in 1983. The raised prevalences of respiratory symptoms in these groups were compared with results from a national representative sample of children studied in 1982. Data on age, sex, respiratory illness, and social and environmental variables were obtained by questionnaire for 4815 children living in innercities. The children were classified as white, Afro-Caribbean, Urdu, Gujarati, Punjabi, other Asian, or "other." Significant differences in the prevalence of respiratory conditions were found among the ethnic groups after allowance was made for the effects of interfering variables. Except for asthma all conditions were most prevalent in Afro-Caribbeans and whites. In these two ethnic groups respiratory illness was significantly associated with belonging to a one parent family and the combined use of gas cookers and paraffin heaters at home.

Respiratory illness was found to vary in prevalence among ethnic groups but may be perceived differently by different groups. Further studies, measuring lung function, are necessary.

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